

# UPDATE

## Prehypertension: What Does It Mean?

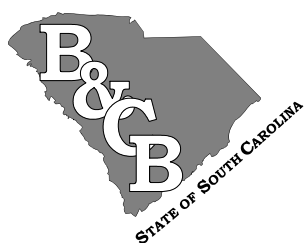
A new report outlining the changes to the former blood pressure definitions was released in the May 21, 2003, issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*. Normal now means less than 120 (systolic) and less than 80 (diastolic) mm Hg. Prehypertension is 120-139/80-89 mm Hg. Stage 1 hypertension is 140-159/90-99 mm Hg. Stage 2 hypertension is greater than or equal to 160/100 mm Hg. The 1997 categories were optimal, normal, high-normal, and hypertension stages 1, 2, and 3. "Stages 2 and 3 were combined because their treatment is essentially the same," said Chobanian. The new prehypertension category should alert people to their real risk of high blood pressure.

The guidelines do not recommend drug therapy for those with prehypertension unless it is required by another condition, such as diabetes or chronic kidney disease. But the report advises them and encourages those with normal blood pressures to make any needed lifestyle changes. These include losing excess weight, becoming physically active, limiting alcoholic beverages and following a heart-healthy eating plan, including cutting back on salt and other forms of sodium. The report also recommends that, for overall cardiovascular health, persons quit smoking.

### Categories for Blood Pressure Levels in Adults

Blood Pressure Levels (mmHg)			
Category	Systolic		Diastolic
Normal	< 120	and	< 80
Prehypertension	120 – 139	or	80 - 89
High Blood Pressure			
Stage 1 Hypertension	140 – 159	or	90 – 99
Stage 2 Hypertension	≥ 160	or	≥ 100

When systolic and diastolic blood pressure fall into different categories, the higher category should be used to classify blood pressure level. For example, 160/80 mmHg would be stage 2 hypertension (high blood pressure).



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